Language, identity and community: Diasporic discourses on multilingualism and performativity – Portugueseness across time and space

By problematizing the polycentricity of language and the multiple positionings of social actors, the papers in this colloquium explore the sociolinguistic trajectories and the discursive tensions that exist around identity and language within Portuguese-speaking diasporic (emigrant) communities in North America, Western Europe, Scandinavia, and the British Protectorate of the Channel Islands. A critical and ethnographic analysis of multilingual and multivocal performances across different geographical, social and political spaces reveals the complex and unequal ways in which social actors mobilize the symbolic and material capital of language and identity across trans-local markets. How are the social and linguistic boundaries of these diasporic communities structured (between pressures of uniformity and diversity) and with what consequences for whom? How do Portuguese-speaking migrants and their descendants of Mainland European, Azorean and Madeiran heritage negotiate, reproduce or challenge different ideologies of legitimate or authentic ”portugueseness” (ways of being and speaking Portuguese)? In order to explore these questions of structure, agency, time and space, among others, the papers in this colloquium draw from critical discourse analysis, critical interactional sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. The data analyzed present a broad range of linguistic and identity performances spanning from political discourses, comedy sketches, personal narratives, and everyday interactions. In addition to examining the specificity of each particular sociolinguistic context, the papers also speak to the larger impact that globalization, transnational mobility and post-nationalism have had on traditional representations of language, identity and other social categories.

Individual contributors:

Sandi Michele de Oliveira: 40 Years Later: Discourses of the Revolution and the Construction of Identity in the Portuguese Diaspora

Jaine Beswick: Sou Madeirense, embora pertenço a esta ilha: Multifaceted Identities and Multilingual Interactions of the Madeiran Portuguese on Jersey.

Michele Koven: Contesting Emigrants’ ”Portugueseness” on YouTube: The case of Ro et Cut’s Vamos a Portugal

Emanuel da Silva: Mobilizing linguistic marginality: Humour, youth and azoreanness in Toronto’s Portuguese market.

Keywords: Portuguese, transnationalism, ideologies.